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THE ADVANTAGES OF SUNDAY SCHOOLS;

A DISCOURSE,

Preached for the Benefit of that uſeful and excellent CHARITY,

At *St. MARY's* Church, in MANCHESTER,

On SUNDAY the 2d of OCTOBER, 1785;

To which is prefixed,

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE

ORIGIN, DESIGN, AND PROGRESS OF THIS INSTITUTION.

Publiſhed by Order of the CHAIRMAN of the COMMITTEE,

By the Rev. JOHN BENNETT,

SECRETARY TO THE SOCIETY.

I think the rectifying the EDUCATION OF YOUTH, *to be a Thing ſo important, that, till it pleaſe God to awaken Men to a greater Senſe than they yet have of the neceſſity and uſefulneſs of that, I ſhall ſcarce expect any ſuch Reformation, as I wiſh, either of Men's Principles or Manners.* BOYLE. Appendix to his Life, by BIRCH.

Feed my Lambs. John 21. 15.

PRINTED BY C. WHEELER,

And ſold by I. Clark, and all the Bookſellers in Mancheſter; T. Cadell, in the Strand; J. Phillips, Lombard-ſtreet; and Mr. Rivington, St. Paul's Church-yard, London.

BRITISH MUSEUM

GENERAL REMARKS

ON THE

NATURE AND PROGRESS OF THE INSTITUTION.

THE Author ſends this Diſcourſe into the world without any hopes of emolument or fame, and ſolely with a deſire of diffuſing a Charity, which bears, upon its very face, the Glory of God and the beſt and deareſt intereſts of man.

The ignorance, diſorders, and wickedneſs of our poor are too notorious to have eſcaped general obſervation, and too ſhocking for a perſon of any tolerable ſenſibility to behold without a ſympathizing tear. But a Chriſtian, from the very nature of his principles, is expected to be much more ſenſibly affected with this deplorable condition of his brethren; and, whilſt he feels the ſame compaſſion for them, which his Saviour once expreſſed for a periſhing Jeruſalem, he will never have acted up to the ſublimity of his character, till he has taken every method to impreſs upon their minds, "with line upon line, and precept upon precept, the things that belong "both to their temporal and eternal peace." Whilſt, therefore, we are engaged in a very arduous and expenſive undertaking, to propagate Chriſtianity amongſt Savages and Heathens, it ſeems but reaſonable that a primary attention ſhould be paid to the inſtruction and converſion of our Heathens at home. For we can never expect our efforts amongſt foreign and uncivilized nations, to be crowned with ſucceſs, till they perceive that our religion has accompliſhed amongſt *ourſelves*, what it is ſo laudably attempting abroad; till they ſee that all orders and degrees of men amongſt us, are a living example of the faith they profeſs;—and, that the Chriſtian rills, with which we wiſh to water their reſpective countries, flow from a clear and unpolluted ſource.

Amongſt the moſt promiſing ſchemes for propagating our moſt holy faith, and diffuſing ſentiments of piety and virtue amongſt the common people,

people, the Inſtitution of Sunday Schools claims a very principal and diſtinguiſhed place. If it was either neceſſary or uninvidious, great and very celebrated names might be adduced in numbers, to ſanction their ſtrong probability of conducing both to individual and *national* reformation. But, where a caſe is ſelf-evident, authorities are unneceſſary; and indeed the rapidity with which they are ſpreading through all parts of the kingdom, is the ſtrongeſt and moſt irrefragable teſtimony of the general opinion entertained on this ſubject.

All agree in admitting the uſefulneſs of the deſign; and all, as juſtly argue, that every thing depends upon the prudence and activity with which it is conducted.

It is, indeed, the fate of many human projects to be *ſpecious* in theory, but *impracticable*, or leſs *happy* in the execution. If this reaſoning could be ever applicable to the preſent undertaking. under any poſſible form, it might be ſuppoſed to operate with its full force in Mancheſter—where the large, unwieldy ſize of the town renders one ſingle uniformity of plan, ſeemingly, impracticable—where remoteneſs of diſtance, in the ſeveral ſchools, prevents quickneſs of information—where little abuſes, for a time, may elude particular obſervation—where the ſcheme comprizes people of all religious deſcriptions—where party prejudices have not been ſuppoſed to be weakeſt—and where the vaſt machine might be ſtopped by a failure in any of the very complicated, and neceſſary movements.

This diſadvantage, however, has not exiſted in ſuch a degree, as to communicate any very ſerious alarm. Twelve months have, now, elapſed ſince the commencement of this Inſtitution; and, during all this time, experience has more than realized all the warmth of expectation. We have, now, in theſe Seminaries 2291 Boys and Girls. The diligence of the Teachers has been active beyond a paralell; and their diſcipline, in general, has done equal honour to their heart and underſtanding. They have not laboured from merely mercenary motives, but from a principle of conſcience; and their ſingular zeal, thus ſtrengthened by affection, has been attended with as ſingular and extraordinary ſucceſs. The Viſitors have been, for the *moſt part*, faithful in the execution of their truſt; and the Clergy have generouſly compleated the plan by public Catechiſing and Inſtruction. The effects have been ſuch, as might fairly be expected. The improvement of theſe Children, in learning, has been wonderful; in religious knowledge ſtill more ſurpriſing; and, when they ſing to the praiſe and glory of their Maker, they appear a tribe of Embryo-Angels training

for

for the ſkies. Every Chriſtian heart glows with triumph; and Heaven ſeems, for moments, tranſplanted upon earth.

Still it muſt be confeſſed, that ſo very difficult and comprehenſive a buſineſs has had its little, temporary obſtructions. Still it muſt be owned, that to carry it on with any vigour and ſucceſs, will always be a work of ſo much difficulty and labour, as nothing but truly chriſtian motives will induce us to ſuſtain. Still it wants, and will thankfully acknowledge, the co-operating aids and influence of many, who hitherto have been contented with a bare and ſpeculative acknowledgment of its importance; who, as yet, have watched only with a cold, unaſſiſting curioſity the exertions of their brethren, and have ſacrificed an activity, which, in the chriſtian annals, might have immortalized their memory, to the tranquillity of indolence, and the inglorioufneſs of retirement.

At preſent, it may be ſuppoſed that novelty has given life to efforts, and vigour to exertion. And it requires no great penetration to foreſee, that, without a continuance of thoſe foſtering aids, which have brought it into being, and nurſed it through its infancy, it never can attain the confirmed bloom of youth, much leſs arrive to its manhood and perfection. And, if any of the officers, in their different departments, ſhould relax from their *preſent* induſtry and zeal; or, if any particular denomination of Chriſtians ſhould diſplay more of a ſpirit for dominion, or the propagation of their own particular tenets, than the merely furniſhing theſe children's minds with ſome ſalutary principles of piety and knowledge, offences will come; ſeparations will enſue; activity will be diſcouraged; Charity will wax cold; and the ſyſtem, at large, will immediately ſink into ruin or diſorder.

But let us, with a truly Chriſtian ſpirit, avoid, as much as poſſible, any of theſe conſequences. Fired with the love of the Redeemer, and of ſouls; conſcious of the noble work in which we are engaged, "of training up "ſons and daughters to God," let us ſtrive to unite the wiſdom of the ſerpent with the ſimplicity of the dove—Let no one ſay, "I am of Paul, or "I of Apollos," and forget, in little tranſient diſtinctions, the general deſign. Firm in maintaining our own principles inviolate, let us extend the neceſſary indulgence to the ſentiments of others; in particular as the uſefulneſs, the vigour and durability of this excellent inſtitution, ſo very much depend on the prudence, the vigilance and activity of the Viſitors; as theſe are the very life and ſoul of the ſyſtem; the veins through which the blood is daily circulating to the heart, and, from that heart ſent back to the re-

 moteſt

moteſt members, let me be permitted earneſtly to preſs it on the minds of all Gentlemen, not to think of accepting ſuch an office, unleſs they have leiſure, as well as inclination to diſcharge it with the becoming fidelity and zeal. In ſhort, as the cauſe is Heaven's, and our object is divine, let us reſolve to work together with one another in love, for the good of the whole; and conſidering the little difficulties, oppoſitions, fatigues, or even cenſures we may meet with, in the conſcientious diſcharge of our reſpective offices, as the unavoidable tax on every publick undertaking; the never-failing portion of thoſe, who attempt to ſerve, even in the moſt diſintereſted manner, the ſtrange, heterogeneous mixture of mankind, " let us " none of " us be weary in well doing, for in due ſeaſon, we ſhall certainly reap if " we faint not."

MATTHEW

MATTHEW 25. 40.

INASMUCH AS YE HAVE DONE IT UNTO ONE OF THE LEAST OF THESE MY BRETHREN, YE HAVE DONE IT UNTO ME.

WHATEVER may be the little tranſitory difference of our allotments in this life, it is certain we are all parts of one comprehenſive whole; we are all links of one grand and univerſal chain; we are all brethren of one family; children of one God; we are all equally ſubject to ſorrow, infirmity, ſickneſs and death; our fortunes and our lives are at the mercy of the elements; fire, ſtorms, hurricanes, famine may quickly rank the rich amongſt the pooreſt of his brethren, and render him an humble ſuppliant for that favour and aſſiſtance, which once he had it in his power to beſtow.

With wants and intereſts thus interwoven; with a relationſhip thus inſcribed on our nature; with the *probability* of ſorrow, and the *certainty* of death, we ſhould find it the general *intereſt* to cultivate a ſpirit of benevolence and charity, if nature had infuſed into us none of the ſofter feelings, and Revelation had preſcribed no ſtandard for our actions.

Thus the Heathens, who were guided only by the light of reaſon, conſidered the exerciſe of a * diffuſive philanthropy, as the higheſt of all moral duties. One of their philoſophers uttered this divine ſentence—that we can, by nothing, ſo nearly approach to the gods, as by doing good; † and an

* Cic. de Offic. *Juſtitiæ* pars eſt beneficentia, quam eandem vel benignitatem vel liberalitatem appellare licet. Ea nihil eſt naturæ hominum accommodatius, et in hominum genere, nulla melior eſt natura, quam eorum, qui ſe natos ad homines juvandos, tutandos, conſervandos arbitrantur.

† Suet. in Vit. Tit. The caſe was, the more enlightened of theſe people ſaw that the diffuſion of happineſs through every mode and poſſibility of life was the one, unvarying end and deſign of creation. They ſaw what the ſcriptures have ſince, ſo clearly, taught, that the Almighty "is kind to the evil and to the good, and ſendeth rain on the juſt and on the unjuſt;" that mercy was

an Emperor, more diſtinguiſhed by his virtues than his crown, declared, on the ſober recollection of an evening, that he had loſt a day, becauſe it had been marked with no act of generoſity, and had communicated no bleſſings to mankind.

But the Chriſtian religion has carried this *natural* duty of benevolence to its higheſt perfection. It has placed it upon an infinitely more intereſting baſis, and given it ſuperior expectations of reward. It is no longer left to the precarious impulſe of complexional tenderneſs; to motives of a ſelfiſh, intereſted policy; to ſpeculative refinement, or to a chain of philoſophical arguments and deductions. It is principally made the touchſtone of our belonging to Chriſt, and the condition of our final acceptance with him, at the great and cloſing day. He, who came to enlighten our darkneſs, *" to " bear our ſorrows," and to die upon the croſs, as an atonement for our ſins, has, with an aſtoniſhing pathos and condeſcenſion, *appropriated* the ſufferings and neceſſities of the poor; has repreſented *himſelf*, as hungering in *their* hunger, as *naked* in *their* nakedneſs, and *grieved* in *their* grief; and has commanded all his followers, who are bleſſed with the opportunity, to feed, to clothe, to protect and comfort them, as members of his body; to feel for *their* diſtreſſes, in proportion as they would expreſs a ſenſibility for *his*, or expect his favour in that ſolemn moment, when every temporal diſtinction ſhall be dropped, and riches can afford no pleaſure, in the recollection, excepting as they have been ſpent in acts of charity and mercy to our neighbours.

Do you grieve, then, to ſee ſo many almoſt naked, whilſt others are " clothed in purple and fine linen?"—Do you wonder that ſuch numbers ſucceed in all their wiſhes—whilſt others with equal or ſuperior merit are doomed to a perpetual obſcurity or diſappointment? Suſpend your aſtoniſhment, and dry your tears. Fancy, no longer, that the father of mankind has any weakneſſes of partiality; any favourites amongſt his children;

was his univerſal aim, and that, therefore, the exerciſe of it in themſelves, was the neareſt copy they could poſſibly take of this amiable, ſupreme, infallible original. They perceived their mutual relationſhip and connexion; as men of ſenſibility, they felt the godlike pleaſure of relieving; and as men of philoſophical penetration and enquiry, they knew that ſociety could not, otherwiſe, be ſupported in harmony and order. For, if attraction be that principle, which keeps the natural world from ſinking into confuſion, which unites ſun, planets, water, air and all the other elements ſo cloſely to each other by a reciprocal impulſe, charity is the attraction of the moral world, which alones preſerves the vaſt, collective ſyſtem from ruin and deſtruction.

* Iſai. 53. 4.

or

or * " that his tender mercies are not equally over all his works." This world is a diſordered maſs—It was intended to be ſo for our diſcipline and trial. Compared with our *full* exiſtence, it is but a moment. And theſe diſtinctions are neceſſary for the very preſervation and order of ſociety. In the mean time, let theſe poor be happy. Let them exerciſe the virtues of thankfulneſs, and reſignation. They are the *Wards* of Providence, and intended to have a portion from the fulneſs of their brethren. But let the Rich tremble. They have many, many talents to account for, and the day is at hand!

" *I* was an hungered and ye gave *me* meat; *I* was thirſty, in *my poor* " *members*, and ye gave *me* drink; *naked*, and ye clothed *me*; ſick, and in " priſon, and ye came unto *me*. And verily I ſay unto you, inaſmuch as " ye have done it unto one of the *leaſt* of theſe my brethren, ye have " done it unto me."

Much, therefore, and long, as mankind have diſputed, and perſecuted one another about ſects and opinions; and much as has been the Chriſtian blood, which has deluged the world, yet the † *end* of the Commandment, the very eſſence, crown and finiſhing of all Religion, is " *Charity*, out of a " pure heart, and of a good conſcience, and of faith unfeigned." Love to our Redeemer, evidenced in works of mercy to his creatures, is the *ſoul* of this charity; is more, in the eye of God and of impartial reaſon, than ‡ " whole " burnt offerings and ſacrifices," than all external forms and ceremonies whatſoever: the firſt is the *end*; the latter, however multiplied, or however underſtood, can only be the *means*; whilſt the ſenſations we derive from the exerciſe of this virtue, reſemble the ſacred ſource from which it ſprings, and are, in the literal ſtrictneſs, rational—divine!

But this Charity has its various degrees of perfection. One ſpecies of it riſeth above another, as ‖ " one ſtar differeth from another ſtar in glory."

That we ſhould relieve the *temporal* wants of our brethren will always, no doubt, be a conſiderable ſpecimen of Charity, whilſt hunger, thirſt, and nakedneſs are ſo uncomfortable to nature, and ſo grievous to be born. But, ſtill, as this life, with all its wants and miſeries, ſhall ſoon have an end; as the poor ſhall quickly find a reſpite from all their ſufferings in the grave, that is certainly the *ſublimeſt* ſpecies of compaſſion, which extends to their ſouls, and conſults their well being through all that ſucceſſion of

 innumerable

* Pſ. 145. 9. † 1 Tim. 1. 5. ‡ Mark 12. 33. ‖ † 1 Cor. 15. 41.

innumerable ages, for which they are born. It was this, which called the Saviour upon earth; he, profeſſedly, * " came to ſeek and to ſave thoſe that " were loſt," by enlightening their ignorance, and dying for their ſins. It is to promote this his heavenly kingdom in the hearts of men, that the Almighty interferes amongſt his creatures by his Spirit, by his ſcriptures, by his meſſengers, by his mercies, by his judgments, and by all the wonderful train of his providential diſpenſations. It is for this, that † " angels are " commiſſioned to ſuccour us in this vale of temptation. It was for this, that prophets ſpoke. It was for this, that martyrs bled. It was for this, that St. Paul ſuſtained his tribulations. It is this, which has engaged the moſt earneſt zeal of the moſt pious men in all ages and nations—and no wonder, when we conſider the ſublimity of the intention; ‡ ſince the real knowledge of God, founded in the ſoul, promotes happineſs, as widely as it circulates; would, if univerſal, render the preſent world a Paradiſe of peace, harmony and joy; and would train up Inhabitants for the kingdom of Heaven, in glory exceeding the ſtars of the firmament, and, in number, " the ſand that is upon the ſea ſhore."

To engage, therefore, in any method of ſaving the *ſouls* of men, is carrying human nature to its higheſt perfection. It is emulating the bleſſed ſpirits, that are about the throne. It is animating with an angelick ſoul, theſe bodies of clay. It is imitating the pattern ſet us by Jehovah. It is making rays of the Divinity ſparkle about man. It is becoming delegates for Heaven; and delegates for Heaven " ſhall not loſe their reward."

Every other mode of charity, in ſhort, compared with this, drops its diminiſhed head. It is earth, compared with heaven—It is time, contraſted with eternity—It is a feeble, glimmering taper, oppoſed to the ſun.

When the broken fragments you may have, occaſionally, diſtributed to the hunger of poor people have entirely periſhed, this immortal food, which you have given to their minds, ſtill ſhall remain. When the garments you have beſtowed to clothe their naked limbs, have waxed old, theſe principles ſhall flouriſh in an unfading bloom—And, when ſickneſſes, diſtreſſes, ſorrows, enter their humble dwellings, will adminiſter that fortitude,

* Luke 19. 10. † Collect for St. Michael and all Angels and Heb. 1. 14.

‡ What an opportunity has every private Chriſtian of any tolerable fortune, to promote the eternal welfare of his poorer brethren, by diſtributing amongſt them ſome of thoſe little tracts, which are publiſhed by the Society for propagating Chriſtian Knowledge in foreign parts. A very little ſum of money would purchaſe a great number of theſe valuable books; and the reading of them might make impreſſions upon plain and honeſt minds, that would never be eraſed.

tude, which can ſupport its agonies, and ſmile away its misfortunes—Nay, "when their heart * and their ſtrength fails," will point them to God, as "the ſtrength of their heart, and their portion for ever." † "Whoſo, "properly, eateth of this bread, ſhall live for ever;" and this ‡ "water "ſhall be in him, a well of water ſpringing up unto eternal life."

But, if this ſalvation of the ſoul be the firſt object of a Chriſtian's zeal, it has occurred to every reflecting mind, that it is moſt ſubſtantially and effectually ſecured by a virtuous education, becauſe all inſtruction is beſt received, before the mind has taken any improper bias; before it is polluted by the contagion of example—petrified with vice—ſeduced by the ſcoffs and ridicule of companions—or blunted by the world.

‖ Hence Charity Schools for the reception of poor children are very general through a kingdom, that is ſoftened by humanity, and enlightened by the goſpel; the number and the great variety of theſe inſtitutions afford to the humane mind a very pleaſing contemplation; their good effects, no doubt, have been conſiderably felt upon the maſs of ſociety; if they have fallen gently and *imperceptibly*, like the dew, like the dew, they have promoted moral vegetation. Many of their founders, I truſt, are with God; and the memory of thoſe, who continue to ſupport them, deſerves to be immortal.

But though charity has done ſo much, *more* remains to § be done. Though it

* Pſ. 73. 26. † John 6. 58. ‡ John 4. 14.

‖ There is one regulation in Mancheſter, which deſerves the attention of every other part of the kingdom, where it may not happen to be, already, adopted. It is not unuſual, in many places, for the Church-warden or Miniſter to diſtribute the offertory money amongſt the poor and neceſſitous people, that may caſually attend the ſervice. It was, once, ſo here. But the benefaction to any individual, in ſuch a caſe, could be but ſmall; the relief of conſequence could be but very tranſient and inadequate; *clamorous* might take place of *modeſt* poverty, and artificial ſorrow is often louder than real; and it was, ſometimes, obſerved that the ſacred pittance was only abuſed to improper purpoſes of drunkenneſs and diſorder. Hence a reſolution was formed of devoting it to the purpoſe of educating poor Boys and Girls; one of theſe Charity Schools is annexed to every church; and, in this decent and orderly town, where the ſacraments are monthly, and where it is not uncommon to ſee 150 communicants at the altar, the fund is, generally, found ſufficient for this excellent purpoſe. The children are, occaſionally, catechized by their miniſter, and grow up into uſeful members of ſociety, citizens and chriſtians.

§ What forcible reflections in favour of charity ſchools occur in Spect. vol. 4, No. 294. Would you do an handſome thing without return, do it for an infant, that is not ſenſible of the obligation. Would you do it for public good? do it for one who would be an honeſt artificer. Would you do it for the ſake of Heaven? give it to one, who ſhall be inſtructed in the worſhip of him, for whoſe ſake you give it.

it has educated many, though it has carried * thouſands of theſe lambs in its boſom, ſtill there is much poverty, unrelieved—much ignorance, uninſtructed—ſtill there is vice and diſorder in the world. Still that happy period ſeems to be diſtant, which humanity pants for, and which every real chriſtian ſhould long to accelerate, when † "all the kingdoms of the earth ſhall "become the kingdoms of God, and of his Chriſt;" when he ſhall reign in the hearts and affections of his people; when his name ſhall be acknowledged from pole to pole, and "the earth ſhall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the ſeas."

Theſe ſeminaries, numerous as they are, are not able to accommodate one third of the children, who are candidates for admiſſion; numberleſs parents, doubtleſs, there muſt be, who, totally inſenſible to the welfare of their offspring, never think of ſuing for this ineſtimable privilege; who, like the ‖ oſtrich, leave their young ones in the wilderneſs, to ſhift for themſelves; amongſt the children, that *are* received into theſe chriſtian Nurſeries, many are remanded back by thoughtleſs, or neceſſitous parents, ſo ſoon as they can earn a morſel of bread: and thouſands from this principle, in order to procure a little food for their bodies, have no leiſure to lay in any for their minds—and, whether it ariſes from *unavoidable* poverty, or from the idleneſs, drunkenneſs, or extravagance of parents—the fact is—that, through many parts of the kingdom (but, particularly, the commercial and populous ones) groupes of little *heathens* are ſeen wandering about without any ſenſe or knowledge of their duty—with parents, Orphans—friendleſs, with Friends about them—loathſome with dirt—ſtill more ſo with vice—rending the air with blaſphemies and curſes—profaning the ſabbath with every diſorder—and touching chriſtian ſenſibility with unutterable pangs. Like Moſes, when expoſed to periſh in the river, theſe children are ſurrounded with the much more dangerous waves of ignorance and vice—§ "And behold the Babes weep·" —And longs not every Chriſtian to wipe theſe tears? Does not his "ſoul burn within him" for theſe wandering, diſtreſſed young ones of his Redeemer's flock? ¶ Should he even "give ſleep to his eyes, or ſlumber to his eyelids," before he has hit upon ſome happy method of reſcuing them from this probable, impending deſtruction? But why do I declaim? If, in the dark abodes of poverty they have ſighed, the ſigh has not been in vain. Humanity, like Pharaoh's daughter, has heard their cries. Charity has taken them into

* Iſai. 40. 11. † Rev. 11. 15. ‡ Iſai. 11. 9. ‖ Job. 39. § Exod. 2. 6. ¶ Pſalm 132. 4.

into her ſovereign protection. She has conſigned them over to Religion, to be nurſed for her own.

But (to ſpeak without a figure) to aſſiſt Children under all theſe dilemmas, SUNDAY SCHOOLS have been inſtituted; and (permit me to ſay with triumph) ſeem likely to become univerſal through the nation. The number of applications, which have been received by the Society at Mancheſter, for a ſpecimen of our plan, from many parts of this kingdom, and ſome quarters of Wales, prove, that this * "grain of muſtard ſeed," is growing into a tree, whoſe branches may ſpread around for "the healing of the nations." To dwell on their advantages, would be attempting to demonſtrate a ſelf-evident propoſition. and affronting the common penetration of mankind. The neceſſity of education, and of *early* education, is univerſally acknowledged; and this furniſhes the opportunity to thoſe loweſt of our people, who, otherwiſe, might live and die in the groſſeſt ignorance of their God and their Redeemer; who, for want of it, are the bane and nuiſance of ſociety, and diſgrace the human form, by moſt *inhuman* and abominable actions. Some of the advantages, however, which are *peculiar* to this Charity, perhaps the nature of the preſent ſolemnity calls upon me to ſketch out; but I ſhall do it with that brevity, which ſuppoſes them obvious to every perſons reflexion.

One grand inlet to all crimes whatever, is confeſſed to be, a profanation of the ſabbath. Amongſt the rich, it leads to pleaſure, licentiouſneſs, and unbelief; amongſt the poorer, to a lethargy and ſtupefaction of mind, which nothing, but Eternity is able to remove. The vileſt criminals, when carried to the fatal tree, amidſt the groans of parents, the agonies of friends, and the pity of the world, have owned this to have been the primary cauſe of all their misfortunes; and have conjured ſpectators with a laſt, pathetic energy, to avoid their example, as they wiſhed to eſcape their melancholy end. This Inſtitution (I need not tell you) obviates this evil. The children are required to come neat and clean to this houſe of God, which, otherwiſe, perhaps they never would have entered, excepting to have witneſſed the laſt interment of a friend, or, when carried themſelves thoughtleſs—ſpeechleſs—motionleſs—to a grave, for which they had made, alas! little preparation. It is ſomething to prevent the diſmal conſequences, which always reſult from a neglect of the ſabbath, and from irreverence to the ſanctuary of God; and may we not reaſonably ſuppoſe, that, in ſome happy moment, good impreſſions may be made, and that ‖ "the word of God, "which is ſharper than any two-edged ſword, may pierce them to the heart?"

* Matt. 13. 31. ‖ Heb. 4. 12.

If I was called upon to mention *another* evil, which lurks at the bottom of all our ignorance and diſorders, I would fix upon the neglect of that public Catechiſing, * which is ſo ſtrictly enjoined by the rubrick of our Church, and ſo warmly recommended to the Clergy of this dioceſe, from the higheſt authority.

The neglect of this duty has been lamented by all truly ſerious divines, almoſt from the reformation to the preſent moment. And it remains to be lamented by every ſerious Chriſtian, who has the honour of God, the intereſts of Religion, and the enlargement of his Saviour's kingdom, really, at heart. Hence people, particularly, of the eſtabliſhed church, take up an hereditary faith,

* The Catechumens formed one order of the Members of the primitive church. Euſ. Dem. Evan. Lib. 7. c. 2. p. 323.

A number of people, with the title of Catechiſts, were ſet apart for their immediate inſtruction. Theſe were not, always, clergymen, but, ſometimes, choſen from the more pious of the laity; though the office was, occaſionally, performed by miniſters, and, not unfrequently, by the biſhops themſelves. Bingham's Church Antiq.

In purſuance of this ancient cuſtom, the 59th canon of our church requires, that every Incumbent ſhall catechiſe the young and ignorant of his pariſh every Sunday. The pious and indefatigable Archbiſhop Secker had the higheſt opinion of this mode of inſtruction, and very warmly preſſed it on the obſervance of his clergy. See his 2d Charge to the Clergy in the Dioceſe of Oxford. The Biſhop of Cheſter ſtrongly inforces it both by his charges, and his example.

On the neceſſity and benefits of catechiſing. See Biſhop Stillingfleet's Orig. Sac. vol. 3. p. 628. Biſhop Bull's Works, vol. 4. p. 863. Tillot. Fol. vol. 1. p. 534. Burnet's Paſtoral Care, p. 166. A diſcourſe lately publiſhed by the ingenious and learned Biſhop of Carliſle.

If it either became my age or ſtation to hazard a remark, which indeed, has reſulted from dear bought experience, I would venture to ſay, that the practice of catechiſing would have as good an effect both on the hearts and underſtandings of miniſters themſelves, as on thoſe of their people. It is the misfortune of the younger clergy, from their mode of education, to enter on their ſacred office, much better ſtored with claſſical, philoſophical, with polite and elegant literature, than with that ſacred knowledge, which is immediately, profeſſional, or with a full underſtanding of the ſcriptures. Nothing would, more effectually, remedy this inconvenience, nothing would more ſpeedily furniſh them with a copious ſyſtem of divinity, and a fund of matter for their public inſtructions, than this methodical ſtudy of the principles of Chriſtianity, on which they would be neceſſarily put by the catechiſing of their youth. At preſent, the younger part of them put, ſo ſoon as they enter into the church, on the very difficult and arduous taſk of preparing diſcourſes for the public ear, to write upon ſubjects which they cannot have digeſted, and for which they have no adequate ſtock of materials depoſited in their minds, either ſacrifice their health in giving us, after all, but very crude and imperfect compoſitions; or, appointed, ſome of them, to cures, which require a greater frequency of theſe productions, than any abilities or experience are equal to, fall into an indolent, ſervile habit of copying the ſentiments and diſcourſes of others, which, as they are not their own, they will never deliver with a becoming warmth, energy or animation.

faith, like an hereditary name, without any previous examination or conviction. Hence " a groſs darkneſs covers the earth, which, on any other principle, would be abſolutely unaccountable in this full, meridian ſtate of goſpel light and revelation; hence the ignorance is too much extended to all ranks in ſociety; and hence many, who from their age might be expected to be teachers, need themſelves previouſly to be taught, * " what are the firſt " principles of the doctrine of Chriſt."

If all children could be prevailed upon, if all the poor could be expected to attend divine ſervice, it is impoſſible that our adopted mode of preaching ſhould be familiar enough to reach their very unopened capacities; if it *was* ſo plain, † to the Jews it would be a ſtumbling-block, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs;" the ſcholars, criticks, and philoſophers of the age, would turn away with indignation or contempt, from a repaſt, that had no ſweetneſs to the taſte, and appeared to have no *elegance* in the preparation. But, without this Inſtitution, the children of the pooreſt, who moſt need inſtruction, would not come at all! by it they are obliged; and, if their parents be careful to ſend them with the exactneſs, which the rules require—if the Viſitors of theſe ſchools be conſcientious ſtewards over their little houſhold—if the Teachers perform their duty, by inſtilling religious principles, whilſt they train them to ſome little rudiments of learning—above all, if the Clergy *crown* this work by their pious ſuperintendency, and this public Catechiſing—not only theſe " ‡ poor Babes"—but likewiſe the more adult, the elegant and rich; who will, *occaſionally*, attend theſe lectures, may profit by this " ſincere milk of the word;" and what can be the conſequence, but general utility, and general edification?

An harveſt of ſaints may be reaped to God, who would have become an harveſt of ſinners, ripe only for deſtruction. The child, who would, otherwiſe, have affronted his Maker by blaſphemies or curſes, may, now, approach him with prayers, or praiſe him with hallelujahs! He, who would have ſtolen, perhaps, *has* ſtolen, may, now, ſteal no more. The man, who would have robbed us of our money or our lives, may, now, become an honeſt ſervant, and a valuable domeſtick. They, whom their crimes would have plunged into hell, may riſe to the higheſt glories in heaven.

Thus ſays Religion. But, if there was even no life after this, the civilizing of the manners of the lower kind of people; their being accuſtomed to cleanlineſs and decency, and having principles of ſobriety, honeſty, and induſtry inſtilled into their minds, is an object not undeſerving the

* Heb. 6. 1. † 1 Corinth. 1. 23. ‡ 1 Pet. 2. 2.

the attention of any civilized ſtate. Nor would it be beneath the chriſtian ambition of any monarch under heaven, or to be ranked with the leaſt glorious atchievements of his reign, to take ſuch a charity as this I am mentioning, into his more eſpecial protection. What but the awful ſanctions * of futurity, can give ſtability to any ſyſtem, or permanency to any government on earth? What elſe can preſerve any throne from tottering, or any ruler from perpetual invaſions or alarms? Whence muſt national ſucceſſes come, but from national merit, and national integrity? Whence muſt juſtice, temperance, fortitude, vigour, patriotiſm, enterprize, love, peace, unity, and concord ſpring, but from this cœleſtial ſource of " ‡ every " good and every perfect gift?" What elſe can be the baſis of all thoſe varied, reciprocal duties, which bind the fabrick of ſociety together, in indiſſoluble

* Porro religione remota, civitatum firmitas intrinſica ſemper in incerto foret; ac ad cives in officio continendos, haudquaquam ſufficeret metus temporalis pœnæ, fides ſuperioribus data, ejuſque ſervandæ gloria et gratitudo, quod ope ſummi imperii a miſeriis ſtatus naturalis defendantur. Johnſon's Puffen. Lib. 2. c. 4. p. 211. De Relig. Nat.

Pone ſeram, cohibe, ſed quis cuſtodiet ipſos *cuſtodes*. Juv. Sat. 6. 346.

Pietate adverſus Deos ſublata, fides etiam et ſocietas humani generis, et excellentiſſima virtus, juſtitia tollitur. Cic. de Nat.

Not a monarch or legiſlator has ariſen in the world, who has not found it neceſſary to call in the aids and ſanctions of religion to the inforcement of his laws, and the ſecurity of his dominions. Zoroaſter, to whoſe wiſe precepts ancient Perſia owed her grandeur and riches, and whoſe book of the Zend is one of the fineſt projects and monuments of antiquity; the ſublime and enlightened Confucius, at once, the ſage philoſopher and legiſlator of China; Lycurgus, Solon, Numa; need I ſay, Mahomet, the Popes, &c. have all endeavoured to eſtabliſh their ſupremacy over the minds and conſciences of men, *conſiderably*, upon this baſis. See Univ. Hiſt. Artic. Chineſe, Perſians. Plut. in Vit. Lyc. Liv. Lib. 18. in Num. Reg. Luc. Flor. in Num. Pomp.

Almoſt the whole tribe of Free-thinkers have confeſſed, amidſt their ſneers, that religion (artful contrivance as they have repreſented it) was neceſſary to the exiſtence and tranquillity of ſtates. A few of them, indeed, Machiavel, Hobbes, Toland, and Bayle have maintained, for the ſake of cavilling, a different hypotheſis, and contended, that government might be ſupported on the principles of Atheiſm. But this is a mere Utopian theory, that never could be brought to the touch of experience, as there never, yet, was a nation diſcovered, unleſs in a ſtate of uncivilized ferocity (and even this is doubtful) where there did not prevail ſome notion of a God and of a future ſtate. Beſide, theſe men themſelves confeſs, that, without the ſanctions of religion, no government can be ſo permanent and ſtable; and one of them, in a political treatiſe, particularly preſſes it on the rulers of a republic, to keep the foundations of the national religion, cloſe and compact, as the beſt expedient for having obedient citizens, and ſubjects.

In id diligenter incumbere debent, quicumque reipublicæ, aut regno alicui imperent, ut ejus religionis, quam ipſi colunt et venerantur, fundamenta ſarta tectaque conſervent; qua quidem re cives ſuos pios devotoſque efficient, et aptos ad concordiam colendam. Mach. de Rep. Lib. 1. c. 12.

‡ James 1. 17.

indiſſoluble bonds? What fills *public* life with ſo much confuſion, and imbitters *private* with continual feuds, quarrels, animoſities—with imperious maſters, and unfaithful ſervants—with oppreſſive rich, and with diſhoneſt poor, but the want of this all-correcting, all-moderating impulſe? What loads *our pariſhes with intolerable burdens—what fills our ſtreets with beggars, our priſons with criminals, and our paths with murderers, but the abſence of the fear of God, and of the duties to which it naturally leads? What can we depend upon, in *any* ſtation, but principle and virtue? and, till we give this principle, particularly to thoſe inferior people, who will always compoſe the *majority* of a nation, what are laws, what are penalties, and how defective will be the wiſdom of our ſenators, and the vigilance of all our magiſtrates, united? They may *puniſh* crimes; but is it not a Chriſtian's duty, if poſſible, to prevent them? They may *lop off* unprofitable and pernicious branches; but ſhould we not give health and vigour to the root?

If, in ſhort, Charity be the greateſt of all chriſtian virtues, this appears to be the greateſt of charities; if our Saviour himſelf went about doing good, this ſeems to be imitating the Saviour in perfection; if God can look down with approbation on his creatures, it is *now* that he looks; † "if the gates "of hell ſhall not prevail againſt his church," they ſhall not, likewiſe, prevail againſt a ſcheme, that has nothing in contemplation, but to ‡ add daily to the church, ſuch as ſhall be ſaved; if angels rejoice at the converſion of a ſinner, it is now their ſacred harps are ſtrung to harmony, it is now they are chaunting a ſublimer ſong. If it be poſſible to pluck the ſting of death —to give comfort to a moment, which certainly is dread and ſolemn—when the big, but unavailing tear, trembles in the eyes of friends— when what

 we

* The amiable, benevolent, and indefatigable Mr. Howard, who has ſpent ſo much time and money in examining the ſtate of all the priſons in Europe, has the following remarks: There are few priſoners in Switzerland, becauſe care is taken to give the children a religious education. App. to the State of Priſ. p. 88. Coxe's Letters from Switzerland.

He makes the ſame obſervation on Scotland, and aſſigns the following reaſon: It is partly owing to the ſhame and diſgrace, annexed to impriſonment; partly to the ſolemn manner in which oaths are adminiſtered, and trials and executions conducted; but, chiefly, to the general ſobriety of manners produced by the care, which parents and miniſters take to inſtruct the riſing generation. How. St. of Priſ. Art. Scot.

† Matt. 16. 18. ‡ Acts 2. 47.

we have ſpent in pomp, elegance or pleaſure, has vaniſhed * for ever—when the remainder muſt be left to thoſe, who probably, in ſecret, are wiſhing for our death; and, if bequeathed to our *neareſt* friends or children, without the divine bleſſing, may only become a fuel to their pride, or be quickly diſſipated in riot and diſorder—If it be poſſible to eaſe ſuch a moment—is not this the method? Will not theſe Children ſurround us with their bleſſings? Will they not endeavour to ſupport us with their prayers? Will they not embalm our relicks with an eternal gratitude? And, in Heaven, will they not tell our Father, and their own, that, to us under him, they owe the glories of eternity, and the brightneſs of their crown? Nay, will not even their parents ſtupified and inſenſible, as now, they are, gradually catching the influence of their virtue, be brought to uſe this animated language: "Bleſs, O my God, theſe benefactors of my offspring; Crown, O crown "them with the choiceſt of thy favours; Lead, O lead them to the happieſt "of thy manſions; this my ſon was dead, but is alive again; he was loſt! "but is found." The joys of ſuch a moment, exceed all deſcription! Imagination ſinks beneath the ſublimity of the idea! *Heavenly* language is neceſſary to paint *heavenly* ſenſations!

Need I ſay more, to preſs on *chriſtian* people, this real act of *chriſtian* compaſſion? I will not endeavour to excite your compaſſion in favour of theſe Children; becauſe I wiſh you to act from a nobler principle, than that of mere animal tenderneſs; and becauſe I know that impreſſions of this ſort are but temporary and evaneſcent; quickly periſhing in the noiſe of life, the diſtractions of care, in the emulations of pride, and the ſpirit of the world. I will ſay nothing of their pitiable, and unprotected ſituation—of their having done nothing, *perſonally*, imprudent to merit ſuch a lot—I will ſay nothing of their tender age and inexperience, unequal to conflicts, unequal to temptations—I will not mention their cheerleſs cellars—without conveniencies—without neceſſaries—without wholeſome air—without cleanlineſs

* How beautiful, and how ſtrictly true is that Epitaph, which Mr. Addiſon, ſomewhere, mentions, as written on the tomb of a charitable man.

What I ſpent, I loſt;
What I poſſeſſed, is left to others;
What I gave, remains with me.

The Heathens could reaſon in the ſame manner: Cum M. Antonius fortunam ſuam alio tranſlatam videret, et ſibi nihil relictum, egregie mihi videtur exclamaſſe, "Hoc habeo, quod cunque dedi. Sen. de Ben.

Extra fortunam eſt, quidquid donatur amicis,
Quas dederis, ſolas ſemper habebis opes. Mart. Epig. Lib. 5. 45.

neſs—without a Bible. I will not inſult your ſenſibility by obſerving, that *your* children might have been in the ſame ſituation; that, in the viciſſitudes of human things, and in the all-wiſe councils of him, who putteth down one, and ſetteth up another, they ſtill may be naked—they ſtill may be poor—and that, in ſuch a caſe, your tears would ſtream in ſhowers, your hearts would ache, and your tongues beg, with impaſſioned earneſtneſs, ſome pittance of relief—I will not, invidiouſly, remind you, * "clothed, as ſome of you may be, in ſoft and gorgeous apparel"—of your near relationſhip to the pooreſt of theſe poor—as creatures of your God—as members of your Saviour—as brethren—and as friends—but, in conformity to the ſpirit of my text, I will lead your meditations to that awful day, which is to cloſe all human projects and deſigns; which ſhall weigh every action in the balance of the ſanctuary; when † "bags of money ſhall "have waxed old;" when every pleaſure ſhall have vaniſhed, and gaiety ſhall have left no agreeable impreſſions; ‡ "when men's hearts ſhall be "failing them for fear, and for wondering at the things which are coming on "the earth, for the powers of heaven ſhall be ſhaken." With this ſolemn moment in view, and all its accompanyments, I will conjure you, by that debt of gratitude which you owe to your Redeemer, "by his agony and "bloody ſweat, by his croſs and paſſion"—I will conjure you, by thoſe elements, that will then be diſſolving—by yon ſun and moon, that will be falling from their orbits, and this world, which ſhall be wholly wrapped into flames—by § "the Trumpet, which ſhall ſound, and the dead, which ſhall be "raiſed;" by the hopes and fears, the joys and torments of an approaching world; that you will relieve, protect, and aſſiſt theſe loweſt of your brethren, according to the ſubſtance, wherewith God has bleſſed you, and ‖ "lay up "in ſtore for yourſelves, by ſuch acts of charity, a good foundation againſt "the time to come, that ye may inherit everlaſting life."

For hear the ſovereign, and immutable deciſion of the GREAT, UNERRING, and UNIVERSAL JUDGE, "Inaſmuch as ye have done it to one of the leaſt of "theſe my brethren, ye have done it unto me. And the uncharitable ſhall go "away into everlaſting puniſhment, but the charitable into life eternal."

* Luke 7. 25. † Luke 12. 33. ‡ Luke 21. 26. § 1 Corinth. 15. 52.
‖ 1 Tim. 6. 19.

THE END.

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